

Bill Named in Honor of Local Veteran Kyle Barthel

Las Cruces, NM - Wednesday at Veteran's Memorial Park, Congressman Harry Teague unveiled a bill to address an increasingly prevalent issue for military personnel and combat veterans, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Kyle Barthel Veterans and Service Member Mental Health Screening Act calls for mandatory mental health screening for military personnel upon induction into the military, before and after deployment, and before discharge.

"Kyle served in the 101st Airborne and was deployed to Iraq. Kyle reached out and sought treatment but was never able to get the mental health help that he needed and deserved. Sadly, Kyle took his own life after suffering from problems associated with PTSD," said Congressman Harry Teague, speaking of the native Las Crucean the bill is titled in honor of.

The legislation comes amid rising concerns that undiagnosed and untreated PTSD cases are leading to mental health issues that decrease quality of life for returning combat veterans and in some cases result in suicide. Suicide rates for the Army have risen 60% since 2003 and the 101st Airborne, which Kyle was a member of, has this year alone suffered 14 deaths that are being investigated as suicides.

"When the Congress returns from its Memorial Day recess, I will introduce the Kyle Barthel Veterans and Service Members Mental Health Screening Act, a bill calling for mandatory and confidential mental health assessments for service members so that those who need it can get the mental health treatment they have earned and so we can begin to stem the tide of tragic incidents associated with PTSD."

Congressman Harry Teague was joined by Kyle Barthel's mother and close family friend, County Commissioner Scott Krahling at the announcement.

"When I decided to run for public office, it was because I wanted to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Today, I can say I feel like I am part of the solution to a very big problem," said Commissioner Krahling. "Although he isn't here with us today, Kyle is here in spirit and we are here because of him. His life has inspired action that will give hope to the many military personnel and veterans currently suffering from PTSD."

Congressman Harry Teague serves on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and has made fighting for our nation's veterans a central priority since being sworn in January 6th, 2009.

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